

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office Action of October 7, 2004 has been studied and the restriction requirement analyzed.

DETAILED ACTION

Election / Restrictions

Examiner Nicholson has stated "Claims 1 - 20 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b) as being drawn to a nonelected species, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Election was made without traverse in the reply filed on July 2, 2004."

Applicants reserve the right to reinstate withdrawn claims if a generic claim is allowed and file divisional application(s) for withdrawn claims upon completion of the prosecution on the merits of the current application.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

Examiner Nicholson states "Claims 21 - 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by **U. S. Patent 2,877,732 to Eaton**. See male member 12 inserted into female member 13 wherein the members are secured together via split ring (securing means) 20 as it fits into opposing grooves 16d and 17d as shown in fig. 8. The turnbuckle 24 serves as the locking means to lock the split ring into a secured and locked position. See column 2, lines 38 - 57: (*Quotation omitted*).

As to claim 22 note the o-ring seal 39 for providing a fluid tight seal between the members."

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. Applicants have canceled Claims 22 - 24 and included their limitations in Claim 21 to produce a claim Examiner has indicated would be allowable (See **Allowable Subject Matter**, below). For this reason, it is believed the rejection of Claim 21, as currently amended, as being anticipated by **Eaton, U. S. Patent No. 2,877,732**

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under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) is overcome and Applicants request the rejection be withdrawn.

Allowable Subject Matter

Examiner Nicholson has stated "Claims 24 - 31 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims."

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. Applicants have canceled Claims 22 - 24 and included their limitations in Claim 21 to produce the allowable claim suggested by Examiner. Applicants believe Claims 25 - 31 are allowable as amended as they depend either directly or through intervening claims from Claim 21 which has been shown to be in allowable condition as explained above. Applicants therefore request Claims 25 - 31 as written be passed to allowance. For these reasons, Applicants believe the objection with regard to Claims 25 - 31 is overcome and Applicants request the objection be withdrawn.

Conclusion

Examiner has stated "The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure."

Applicants have studied these references but does not believe these references singularly or in combination with the other references cited in the case disclose or suggest the unique structure of Applicants' invention.

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Should you wish to discuss this application, please call Michael P. Hartmann, Agent for Applicants, at (713) 939-2749 or facsimile (713) 939-2856.

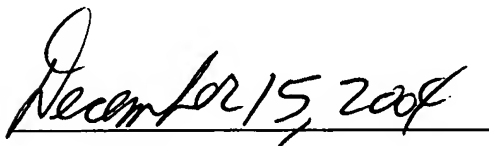
Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING (37 CFR §1.8a)

I hereby certify that this paper (along with any paper referred to as being attached or enclosed) is being deposited with the United States Postal Service on the date shown below with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Non-Fee Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.



Date



Jackie Lee Duke

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Amendments to the Drawings:

No amendments to the Drawings are being made with this paper.